Q. Could you outline the main features of the revolutionary struggle in Spain today?

A. The most important development in the mass movement in Spain today is the growth of the workers' commissions. Despite our fascist government, they have been able to develop strikes and the consequent organisation of the workers to a very high level. An example of this is the recent struggle of the workers in the biggest factory in Spain where not only were significant wage increases won, but the three men who had led the struggle and been dismissed for their revolutionary activity were reinstated.

Statistics show that in 1971 the strike level in Spain was equal to and even higher than in capitalist countries where strikes are not illegal. There is of course a qualitative difference and this gives an indication of the high degree of development of the workers' movement.

Almost equally important is the student movement which now includes a large percentage of the universities' staffs -- especially at the more junior and the temporary level. These staff members have not only formed their own organisation but together with the students called the strike at Madrid University at the end of January.

Then there is the peasant movement against paying taxes, and in some of the dairying regions of the north there has been a "milk war" against the profiteering of the big monopolies. Rather than sell their milk at very low prices, the peasants have poured it on the roads. These are very high levels of struggle, for in conditions of illegality, organisation among the peasants is more difficult than in other spheres. Liberty is essential to the full organisation of the peasants.

Things are on the move among the intellectuals too. Teachers held their first strike early this year, and though the immediate demands were for better wages and conditions the strike was a highly political one because it raised the demand of the right of assembly and the right to strike. Even such moderate people as lawyers have entered the fray -- they have taken issue with the government on the elections to their new governing body in Madrid. The issue itself is not important; what is important is the fact that for the first time there is a mass campaign in the legal profession. These mass movements add up to what we call, in general terms, the forces of work and culture.

The second feature, in my opinion, is the changing attitude of the Church and of the more dynamic sectors of the bourgeoisie in favor of greater civil liberties. The reasons for this are complicated but it has created a very original position -- a convergence of revolutionary forces and a part of the capitalist forces with the specific and temporary common objective of the defeat of fascism and the establishment of democracy.

Our Party has been intensely active in fostering this sort of convergence and in many parts of Spain we have established co-ordinating bodies where representatives of different political movements are starting to have discussions. This trend towards unity, together with the development of the various mass movements, are the two factors which give substance to the immediate task of winning democracy.

Q. I gather that the Church no longer wishes to be identified with the Franco repression and so is engaging in the convergence. Are there any forces in the Church that go further? Are there any such as Camillo Torres (the Spanish priest who went to Bolivia and himself developed as a revolutionary) in Spain?

A. The Church itself, by a majority vote at a special conference of bishops last December, approved a document called "The Church and the Political Community" which calls for civil and political liberties and even for a total amnesty for political prisoners. This changed attitude can be explained by some real desire for a more modern attitude and, without doubt, an opportunistic need to show another face in a future free Spain. But then, inside the Church and Catholicism, there are some clear socialist tendencies. There are groups of young priests who take part in the working class struggles. Among them is one of the group of 10 leaders of whom I spoke, Camacho and others, who works in the building industry in Madrid. In the conditions of illegality the Spanish Party works with groups of priests and Catholics who not only are for democracy, but who both intellectually and actively favor working-class objectives. They are the Camillo Torres of Spain, for in today's conditions it is revolutionary to take part in the mass movements. I should add that some other Spanish priests have gone to Colombia to take Camillo Torres' place.
Q. What support does the Spanish Communist Party have in the various strata of the population?

A. It is very difficult to say, for under conditions of illegality - no elections, no statistics, no possibility of consulting public opinion -- we cannot make an accurate assessment. However, I think we have very strong support in the main working-class centres and I think it is significant that traditional centres of anarchist influence like Catalonia and Andalusia are now among our strongholds. Our influence there is as great as it is among the working class of Madrid and Valencia. Something that has surprised most Spanish observers has been the newly emerged working-class movement in the north-west, with the struggles at El Ferroii and Vigo in which our leadership was evident. And everyone knows that Asturias and the Basque country have been influenced by us for a long time. There are other Left groups, but I think it would be true to say that we do have a very strong influence in the mass movements of the working class.

Next in importance must be our position in the student movement and here our position differs from that in most countries. Our Party has been working in the student movement since the early 'fifties, directly inside the fascist student organisation. We have been able to work in a way which has led to its destruction. With one exception, we have always had a strong influence in the universities, and particularly in the main ones such as the universities in Madrid and Barcelona, and you would be surprised at the work done by our basic party organisations in these institutions. In the Madrid University, for instance, as well as circulating 5000 copies of Mundo Obrero, we publish special organs of the party committee in the various faculties.

That all this has borne fruit is shown in our influence among doctors, lawyers, professors, teachers, economists. Our influence in the universities has been projected into all these fields. This has destroyed the argument that has been used against us that it's not worth working with students because they are revolutionary while they are students, but they later become bourgeois. We have been self-critical about our influence among women, but we believe that the potentiality in this field is strong; much the same applies to our assessment of our work with the peasants.

We are quite influential among young workers and high school students, and I think there is some possibility of activity even in the army.

Q. In view of this what is your main strategic focus?

A. You have been criticised in some circles for advocating as strategy the overthrow of the dictatorship and the institution of capitalist democracy, rather than replacing the dictatorship by a socialist revolution. What is your reply to this criticism? Do you think that a model something like the twin revolution of 1917 in Russia is a possible outcome of the struggle in Spain or do you see it more in terms of the Chilean experience? What would the strategy of the Communist Party of Spain be after the overthrow of the fascist dictatorship?

A. Although the terms may not be scientifically correct, for practical purposes we could put it like this. Our tactic is what we call a Pact for Liberty -- unity of all the forces I spoke of, including a section of the bourgeoisie, for the overthrow of fascism. Comrade Carrillo stated very clearly in his closing remarks at the Eighth Congress that our tactic is the fight for liberty, the overthrow of fascism and for democracy. But we would never call this our strategy. Our strategy is the alliance of the forces of work and culture. The mass movements described earlier are essential tactically, but they are also the basis of our strategy because already within them is the basis upon which we shall build this socialist-orientated alliance. We believe that Lenin's formulation of an alliance of workers and peasants is not adequate for a developed, or relatively developed, country like Spain. Taking into account the changes in the economic and social structure, especially those resulting from the scientific and technological revolution, our "alliance of the forces of work and culture" is what corresponds objectively to Lenin's formulation. So, I think those who criticise us in the way you have mentioned are doing so on a purely speculative level without understanding our tactic and our strategy. Without freedom from fascism there is no real possibility of fighting for socialism. Before October there was February, and we have not had our February yet. We cannot put October before February as that sort of criticism seems to require of us.

Q. And after your February, what will you do then?

A. We are doing now is preparation for after February. You see, if in the development of this policy of broad unity we found that those groups which have a socialist dimension -- the working class, the student movement and others -- if we saw their influence and that of the Communist Party diminish we might have doubts, but the position is the reverse and no one denies this -- these groups which have a socialist dynamic are growing stronger and the reactionary forces weaker and this points to the correctness of our tactic.

When we have won liberty this alliance of the forces of work and culture will provide the political basis for the struggle against monopoly capitalism and for socialist solutions. Before the event we cannot be precise about what form the struggle will take, but we say, and this is very important, that we are not afraid of liberty; on the contrary we will be defenders of liberty to the end and we believe that those who are afraid of liberty and democracy are the forces of monopoly capitalism. We will combat that monopoly capitalism in democratic conditions by the struggle for increasing freedoms at every level. This is something that accords with our idea that socialism itself will be a process of higher and higher levels of liberty.

Q. It might be argued by such critics that at present you are not really raising the question of socialism among these "forces of work and culture," and that when the dictatorship is overthrown they may be confused if they had not already been somewhat prepared.

A. In theory this danger exists, but the other danger is greater today. If we try to mobilise these forces now to fight for socialism we will abandon a large part of the working class which has not yet a socialist consciousness. It is the same in other sectors. Therefore we believe it is correct to place the emphasis now on the political objective of overthrowing fascism, but at the same time to develop in the mass movements a socialist consciousness. In the student movement, for instance, it is obvious that there is no solution of their problems under capitalism. It is not only freedom that they require but a transformation of the universities, and we help the university community -- the students and staff -- to elaborate an alternative, firstly against the fascist struct-
ure, but also for a socialist dimension. For example, the party organ in the medical faculty of the University of Madrid is called Socialist Medicine. We do the same sort of thing with doctors, lawyers, and so on, to say nothing of the working class.

We keep these two aspects -- the aspect of liberty and the aspect of socialism -- separate, but at the same time they are part of a real strategy of revolution. Of course we can make mistakes, but it appears that our critics have not understood that these two aspects -- our tactics and our strategy -- are distinct, although related.

Q. You have stated that the PCE rejects the classical models of the seizure of power. Would you develop this?

A. I shall try, but you must understand that these things are elaborated rather on the march -- unhappily, we are not able to undertake real theoretical work and sometimes we make these conclusions pragmatically. But what I meant is that we cannot expect a socialist revolution in Spain by way of an October 1917 insurrection, because this could only have occurred after a war with its resultant consequences on the army. We cannot have a civil war of the Chinese type either, or the Cuban model of a guerrilla centre taking over power.

Nor can we model ourselves on the experience of the various socialist countries of Europe whose establishment was dependent on the victory of another socialist power. Such models are inconceivable for us and that is why we assert that we cannot apply a classical model of this sort.

As regards guerrilla warfare, we experienced more than 10 years of this during and after the Second World War. This guerrilla activity was developed in an effort to integrate our fight for liberation in the anti-fascist war that was taking place on an international scale. At first it was a defensive measure as people went into the mountains to escape increased persecution, but towards the end of the war it took on a more political character as there was a general feeling among the people that Franco would be defeated with Hitler and Mussolini. But with the cold war, when it became evident that the imperialists were supporting Franco, the peasant masses retreated and the guerrillas were isolated and suffered terrible losses. It was these losses which led us to alter our tactics to the development of the mass movement. Today we do not think the guerrilla activity was a mistake, but we do believe that it was wrong to have prolonged it. When we ceased guerrilla war, we adopted the method of developing the political mass movement.

Q. You have also stated that you reject what you called the “diversity of powers” theory -- “workers’ power,” “student power,” “peasant power,” etc. Perhaps it is not so much a matter of posing one against the other but of combining them -- our strategy in Australia is the combining of the struggle for self-management and workers’ control at all levels -- the struggle for power at all levels -- with the struggle to overthrow the central capitalist State apparatus. Isn’t this necessary in order to avoid the mistakes of the existing socialist countries which have led to bureaucratic deformations and the construction of a new all-powerful bureaucratic socialist State apparatus? In other words, we need this twin, parallel, strategy in order to completely overthrow capitalism and to avoid the mistakes of the past.

A. Our position is not far from that, but when I say I am opposed to these theories I am speaking really of the “partial powers” theory which I think is a reformist conception. This concept of winning student power in the universities, workers’ power in the factories, and so on, actually developed in France and I think the theory is supported by the PSU (Parti Socialiste Unifié). But we believe it is reformist because, expressed in this way, it hides the fundamental question of power -- political power, State power, which is the first thing which must be destroyed in making a revolution. Revolution is the destruction of one power and the creation of another form. But the conception mentioned hides this question, puts it in second place. We say that revolution is a question of power with a capital P, not of partial trends. This is the first point.

Where we are in complete harmony with you, I think, is in our conception of the national strike, in our conception of the workers’ commissions; we believe that the workers themselves create the instruments of struggle and power which will be the decisive element of the future socialist democracy. For instance, we say that the workers’ commissions will not be merely trade unions. They will represent new forms of democracy, new forms of socialist democracy. At our Eighth National Congress, speaking of the national strike, we said that the workers and people themselves create the forms of struggle that will become the instruments of power -- in all localities and at all levels. It is here that we are in complete agreement with you. The socialist State must be truly democratic -- it must express the will of the masses at every level. This is the basis of our work among the force of culture and the forces of labor.

You have to destroy the capitalist power and replace it with the democratic power of the masses.

Q. On the other hand, some marxists and Communist Parties and other revolutionary groups possibly over-stress the importance of the central State apparatus, and have a preconceived idea that this in itself is people’s power?

A. Our conception is different. We see things in terms of complete democracy, a pluralistic socialism, and we think that our current forms of struggle are preparation for this.

Q. Arising from this does the Communist Party of Spain have any views about the reasons for the deformations in the existing socialist countries?

A. We have published something on this, though it is not definitive, of course. But it seems to us that there the State itself contains strong residual bourgeois characteristics and is conditioned by an historic period that is bourgeois and even feudal, at times -- class structure, economic relations, etc. And unless there is a sufficient degree of real democracy, real power of the masses, this creates a dangerous state of affairs, what we call the predominance of State interest and not the predominance of the socialist revolutionary content of the revolution which has created that State. We feel that in some aspects of the policy of the socialist States there is a conservative tendency which is the expression of this State interest. But, of course, there are also other aspects that can be decisive. That is why we support the socialist States against imperialism, but at the same time make open and clear criticism when their policy reflects...
attitudes contrary to the interest of our revolution or of the general movement.

Q. In your article you speak of a period of differentiation within the revolutionary movement. Why do you think this is happening and what do you think is the correct way to proceed if it is?

A. The revolutionary movement is becoming more widely spread. It embraces countries which, in their historical development, are in a pre-feudal situation but in which there is a revolutionary State, and countries which are most advanced in industry and science and so on. In the capitalist world today it is the differences which are being accentuated. Economically there is the terrible process whereby the advanced are advancing further and the less advanced are falling more and more behind and becoming more oppressed. Thus it is not to be expected that there will be a process of greater cohesion. And if the revolutionary process is to be the expression of concrete conditions in each country, it is not surprising that there is this period of differentiation.

We are fighting for what we call unity in diversity -- we fight for unity of the communist and revolutionary movement and respect the independence of each party, each revolutionary movement, which all have their own characteristics. We believe that the unity is expressed in the anti-imperialist struggle and in the socialist objective, but we consider that the diversity, the autonomy is fundamental and decisive in the revolutionary struggle. We do not accept the idea of general laws, based on the experience of some socialist countries which can be used to condemn other revolutionary processes as heretical.

Q. This unity in diversity ... would this include principled criticism of one Communist Party by another, provided such criticism does not lead to interference? In other words that there should be genuine discussion and debate?

A. We believe that it is necessary to have the opportunity to discuss problems of principle and mutual experiences, and we said so at the 1969 conference and on other occasions; but even today it is still not possible. Any criticism is regarded as an attack, so we are not disposed to open new polemics and new divisions by seeking such discussions when conditions are not ripe. We avoid criticism of brother parties and confine ourselves to general theoretical problems and avoid mention of specific parties except when the interests of our revolution are affected fundamentally. Then we express our criticism in a concrete way.

Q. You spoke of the need today for a more offensive strategy. Do you think that some sections of the movement still maintain the old defensive position of the cold war period?

A. Yes, and I will explain it by examples. The victory of the Vietnamese people has brought an entirely new situation -- the post-Vietnam phase of the general crisis of capitalism. I believe that we cannot yet measure the importance of the change. But everything is influenced by it. There has been a turn to the Left, not only in Western Europe, but in this part of the world -- the election results in Japan, in New Zealand, and here in Australia, and I think that this underlines the need for a more offensive revolutionary movement. But there are problems. Take the anti-fascist fight, the problem that affects us most: the attitude here is not everywhere offensive -- on the contrary, there is a kind of quasi-acceptance of the existence of a fascist State in Western Europe by some socialist States as normal. This, we believe, is a typical non-offensive attitude. Another instance is the question of multi-national funds and corporations in Western Europe. The workers have to find new dimensions, new instruments, in their common struggle here. Things are static in this area. We are working on it, but have been unable to create new instruments of the working class. These two different examples illustrate the general idea of the need for more offensive, creative levels of action which correspond with the new possibilities.

Q. You have quoted from Carrillo that "the struggle for socialism must be in its form a struggle for the radical democratisation of the State apparatus and of all institutions of society." Why do you think the struggle for freedom and democracy everywhere is so important today?

A. The growing authoritarian centralised tendency of the capitalist State is leading to the curtailment of the democratic character of society, and there are also bureaucratic deformations in the socialist countries. It is these factors which have led us to state clearly that our conception of socialism is based on the idea of radicalisation of democracy. This must be the answer to the new problems which are arising such as those associated with scientific and technological change. It seems to me that radicalisation of democracy is the answer to these three questions: the authoritarian tendency of the capitalist State, the bureaucratic deformations of the socialist State, and, perhaps in the most profound way, an answer to many problems posed by the development of some aspects of the scientific side of the forces of production.

Q. What do you think are the main problems that need attention in the theoretical sense?

A. For 46 of the 53 years of our party, we have worked under conditions of illegality, and it has not been possible for us to undertake much theoretical work. We are aware of this gap but we have many difficulties. However, in what work we have done the main attention has been in the areas we have been discussing here -- the problem of the State, the problems of the transformation in the social and economic structures which are being carried on by the development of capitalism; our conception of socialism, what is the relation between socialism, liberty, culture.

We are more centred on the political side of theory rather than the abstract theoretical side. While we follow the current debates within marxism, we are opposed to a super-intellectual attitude to marxism. We feel that the tendency of some marxist intellectuals is to close themselves off in books. While we don't negate their contribution to rigorous and serious study of marxism, we believe that this tendency to be enclosed in books is negative.

* See Spanish Communists Speak - pamphlet published by CFA.